



**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

December 3, 2019

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Members of the San Jose City Council,

On behalf of SPUR, we are writing to support Staff's recommendation for the spatial layout for the San Jose Diridon Station. Today marks an important milestone for both the DISC partners and the community in getting one step closer to realizing the vision for Diridon Station. In summary,

- We support elevated station platforms.
- We support two concourses with four station entrances.
- We support the revised concept for the northern segment that shifts the station platforms south
- We support maintaining the existing corridor to the South and not creating a rail viaduct structure over the I-280/87 interchange

SPUR has been deeply engaged in the local, regional and state-level planning and visioning for Diridon Station. Those early planning efforts were greatly advanced in 2017 when SPUR organized a delegation of South Bay elected officials and transit agency leaders to visit four high-speed rail stations and cities in the Netherlands and France. The key takeaways from the study trip informed local efforts and prompted the City of San Jose, VTA, Caltrain and CHSRA to deepen their level of cooperation and coordinate a joint planning process — the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) plan— that will yield a shared long-term vision for the Station. Now a year into the process, we are thrilled to see the advancement of a preferred scenario for the rail alignment by the DISC partners.

Today City Council will consider several “Big Moves” that are integral to the success of the overall project. We ask that as you review the proposed layout you keep in mind the following set of principles based on global best practices:

**Infrastructure decisions last for a century. This is a door that cannot be re-opened once it is closed, and there is no substitute for good foresight.** The decisions we make today are those that will last the next century. We need to ensure that the design and land use decisions are those that can support the future growth and ridership of our community. The success of the station as a regional and statewide mobility hub will determine whether San Jose realizes its potential to significantly grow employment, housing and a commercial center in the transit district. At the same time, Diridon Station needs to function at its highest capacity to support the intensity of jobs that are bound for the district.

**Stations define cities, for good or bad. The best stations require bold political leadership.**

Throughout the world, cities redevelop their train stations and station areas as a way to grow and shape their economies. The cities that do so successfully make bold commitments to shaping both transit and growth. Already, the DISC partners have taken steps to put forward a unified vision for the station and area. Realizing it will require bold political leadership that keeps the long-view that balances the need of the public and private sectors.

**Focus on the customer's needs and experience.**

In designing the station, you are designing a product that will have to meet the needs of many people and withstand the test of time. In order for people to embrace transit, the station and the district, the [user experience](#) must be a central focus in the planning process. If we do not lead with the user experience, the multimodal hub's infrastructure will not move as many people as it could and overall ridership will decline in San Jose and across the transit network. As a result, San Jose will not realize its potential to significantly grow employment close to transit.

With these principles in mind, SPUR recommends the following:

### **Elevated station platforms**

SPUR recommends elevated station platforms as a way to avoid greater conflict between trains and people using the road. Elevating the station platforms further allows for the opportunity to reconnect San Fernando Street to the western side of the station opening up better connections for pedestrians and bikes. With elevated platforms, this offers up the opportunity to further activate the space under the tracks with shops and services.

Elevated platforms free up space in the district for real-estate development by stacking of multiple transportation systems together (heavy rail and commuter trains elevated, buses elevated and/or at-grade, BART and light-rail below ground). While we support this decision, it is important that special attention be made for the quality of design when building out the viaduct. Space under these elevated structures is often neglected, closed off by fences or too bleak to invite people to walk or bike through. Getting the design right will be imperative to the vibrancy and usability of the street by pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Station location and entrances**

SPUR supports the Partner Agencies' recommendation to create two main concourses with four station entrance locations. By having the main concourses located on Santa Clara Street and San Fernando Street it will allow for greater connection in and around the district, connect neighborhoods East & West of the station and ease passenger congestion flowing in and out of the station hall.

Additionally, having a second station hall at San Fernando Street could allow for better transfer and connection times between commuter trains and VTA buses, intercity buses, taxis, TNCs and light rail if located close to the San Fernando entrance /s close to each other. This increased visibility will provide greater ease and understanding for people visiting the Station.

### **Northern alignment**

The northern alignment is one of the most important components within the spatial layout. SPUR supports the revised concept for the northern segment that shifts the station platforms south allowing for additional land to be unlocked for future development. This configuration would prompt the relocation of CEMOF - which has caused a serious bottleneck which has slowed down the rail traffic traveling through Diridon Station, moving CEMOF is a requirement for success.

### **Southern alignment**

SPUR supports maintaining the existing corridor to the South and not creating a rail viaduct structure over the I-280/87 interchange. Maintaining the existing corridor has the least amount of neighborhood impact and creates no impact to Tamien Station and the current development that is underway. The creation of a viaduct poses more neighborhood impact and has the potential to further divide communities. We recognize and understand community concerns regarding the increased rail traffic and noise. Therefore, we encourage the Partner Agencies to devise a safe and aesthetic means of integrating the system with the surrounding neighborhoods.

We commend the partner agencies on the extensive amount of work and effort that has gone into Phase I. The proposed recommendations made by the partner agencies support each of their growth goals and successfully balance the need to allow for increased development in the surrounding area.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important item. We look forward to working alongside partner agencies to further realize the potential of Diridon Station.

Thank you,

Michelle Huttenhoff